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TRANSMITTAL SLIP	DATE 11 Mar 83
TO: [redacted] C/EUR/DDO	
ROOM NO. 4B4405	BUILDING hqs.

REMARKS:

Please read before your trip with the Director

FROM: Harry Rowen, C/NIC		
ROOM NO. 7E62	BUILDING hqs.	EXTENSION [redacted]

FORM NO. 241 1 FEB 55 REPLACES FORM 36-8 WHICH MAY BE USED. (47)

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10 March 1983

NATO Warning and the Soviet's Eastern Europe Problem

NATO's commanders have long been worried about the threat of a surprise Warsaw Pact attack. For one thing, NATO forces in peacetime are poorly positioned for effective defense against a sudden Warsaw Pact attack; for another, at the outset of war, the Soviets can be expected to move swiftly against key NATO facilities, especially command and control and nuclear weapon storage sites, in hopes of paralyzing NATO's responses.

This is a real enough threat and the NATO authorities should take it very seriously. However, it is also important to recognize how potentially precarious the Soviet situation is in Eastern Europe and how this might affect their decisions on how to go to war. Viewed from Moscow, almost all of Eastern Europe is potentially hostile territory. The evidence for this doesn't need repetition here, but it is probable that none of the East European states are seen as reliable partners. This suggests that in a period of intense East-West crisis -- one which may escalate into a war -- the Soviets will take additional measures to ensure that the non-Soviet forces behave as they are supposed to. This could involve activities which would be additional indicators of Soviet preparations for war including Soviet inspections of East European troops, imposition of Soviet controls over key communications facilities and transport links, and the assignment of Soviet "advisors" down to the regiment level. We should look at this possibility in the context of our warning indicators.

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Even if the Soviets take those steps they must be worried about what would happen in East Europe if their forces currently there become engaged in fighting NATO forces and the East Europeans realize that there is a greater chance than before to change the regimes they have been living under? Or at least strike some blows (such as through sabotage) at their subjugators? Consequently, would not the Soviets want to maintain enough troops in the area for "police duties" or at least to guard their lines of communication? These demands on a Soviet troop presence could be large at the time these same troops are needed against NATO's forces.

Proceeding from this analysis, two different strategies appear possible for the Soviets: one is to strike a swift and hopefully decisive blow against NATO without prior reinforcement aimed at getting the war over with quickly. The other is to reinforce massively in order both to secure their rear and to confront NATO with superior forces before shooting starts. (On the second choice, they might try to achieve tactical surprise by staging a "relaxation" of tensions during a period of crisis and then striking.) The first course must look highly risky to the Soviets because everything would hang on the success of the bold strike. Its failure would mean not only the survival of NATO's combat capacity, but perhaps then an Eastern Europe out of control. The latter course, mobilization first, has the important disadvantage of giving NATO time to adopt a less vulnerable posture and to make large-scale pre-attack reinforcements.

The Soviets might try to resolve this dilemma by using nuclear weapons from the outset reasoning that a sudden nuclear strike could be

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decisive within Europe, and that escalation could be averted. But the risks of adopting that course of action are enormous.

This line of argument should not induce complacency in NATO. On the contrary, incorporating the Soviet's East European problem into thinking about how they might start a war increases the likelihood that they would opt for an initial bold strike, non-nuclear or nuclear. Since the bold strike approach would not assuredly take care of the East European problem, the Soviets would probably take at least some preparatory measures to enable them to rush troops into Eastern Europe where their task would be to assure continued East European cooperation with them or, at worst, East European passivity. Assessing the probable nature of these preparatory measures and, most important, detecting them if they begin is an additional intelligence challenge.

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